

**500 WORDS ON LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

PULL

**From PUSH to PULL in
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

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“Leadership development should not be deficit oriented!”

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Recently I had the pleasure of presenting a newly designed leadership development programme to an interested CEO (usually they are not!) of a one billion dollar organisation. He ate me for lunch! He challenged my thinking in two disruptive ways.

Firstly, he wasn't aligned with my view that we have to develop leaders to become better leaders. Their leaders, according to his argument, have on average been within the organisation for 20 or so years and are doing a fantastic job—achieving great results and receiving good feedback from direct reports and colleagues. Their leaders do not have deficits.

We have to change the way we think about leadership development: leaders don't have deficits, but strengths. Development should mean how we channel leadership strength to execute strategy.

Secondly, the business environment is changing constantly and leaders today face ever changing requirements, mind-sets and skills. That is why development is needed.

The CEO agreed with me that the overall objective of leadership development programme is to help leaders to execute strategy. But is that expressed and communicated correctly in today's leadership development programmes?

Although this is not ground breaking, how often do you see a leadership development programme that is completely aligned to the organisation strategy? Most programmes have titles like 'Leading Self', 'Leading Others', 'Leading the Organisation', or 'Leading Business'.

The title alone implies that there is a deficit at play that has to be fixed. Leaders have to resonate with the content and its description. They have to read and to understand what they will help them to do their daily job better.

Leadership development programmes should generate a pull effect rather than pushing leaders to participate. Leaders should not be pushed into programmes: they should want to participate because it will help them work successfully.

I am also no great fan of corporate competency models. These models are static, full of buzz words and often don't change with the change in business environment and strategy. Competency models should be viewed as noise (or, if you like, voice)—a basic universal prerequisite for leaders.

The reality, however, is different: leaders are usually pushed into hierarchical pipeline processes and eventually end up in leadership development programmes they don't want to be part of. Otherwise, they are recommended to take part in programmes that waste their resources—especially the precious time they need to complete their duties.

In the following, you will find five essentials for generating a pull for leadership development.

1 Link content to strategy

Leaders want to see that the programme content is directly linked to the rollout of the organisational strategy. Leaders don't go to fancy trainings for cool and surprising exercises, but will invest time in content that is practical, where their investment is met.

2 Evolve programmes

There is no such thing as a fixed content leadership development programme. Since companies evolve—as does their strategy—programmes should therefore be constantly flexible and mouldable to the new goals.

3 Communicate content

Titles, descriptions, programme announcements. All communications have to be aligned with WHY we are offering this programme: 'Leading Others' is deficit orientated; 'Executing 2030' is not.

4 Match the design to the organisation

The programme design should be built on the organisation's values, the strategy it is implementing and the strategy it intends to execute in the near future.

5 Participants' self-responsibility

It is important is for leaders to be responsible for their own development and to decide when and what they need to learn. The leadership development programme is therefore a journey, not an event.



Yours,
Dr. Marcus Gottschalk and CLP Team

Key words:

Leadership, leadership development programmes, pull effect, organisational strategy, leaders, leadership strengths, nourishing leadership development programmes